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Editorial

Scientific evidence on the origin of SARS-CoV-2



In the last 18 months, everything in the world -directly or indirectly- has pivoted around the coronavirus pandemic. The public and private health systems, the world economy, most productive sectors, educational activities at all levels, transports and travels, as well as people's daily lives, have been tremendously and seriously affected by COVID-19. Obviously, science could not be an exception. Thus, numerous research centers and laboratories have made great efforts to contribute with studies to have the best possible information on the SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. In this sense, the figures are spectacular. Today, PubMed (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>) includes 143,932 results when COVID-19 is used as the search term, while in Scopus (<https://www.scopus.com/search/9>) this number amounts to 152,844 results. To put into context the enormous dimension of these figures, it is interesting to highlight that using influenza as keyword, the number in PubMed is about 2000 results lower: 141,277 (75,681 results for flu). In Scopus, 164,031 for influenza and 34,595 for flu, with papers on influenza already published in the 19th century. For SARS-CoV-2, 88,050 results can be found in PubMed, while Scopus includes 62,292 results.

This huge number of published papers covers a large number of topics related with SARS-CoV-2 and/or COVID-19: detection, diagnosis tests, transmission, symptoms, treatments, sequelae, vaccines, psychological consequences, co-morbidities, severity and mortality, relationships with environmental pollution, nutrition and life style, and a long etcetera. However, very few papers report the results of a controversial issue: the origin of the SARS-CoV-2, and consequently, that of the pandemic. In Scopus, only 80 and 46 documents are found when the search terms "origin of SARS-CoV-2" or "origin of COVID-19" are respectively used. In PubMed, the results are higher, but an exhaustive analysis shows many "background noises" in the literature search. Based on this, it is evident that there is not currently a consensus on it, being

obvious that today's date that origin is not yet well known.

In this same line, a couple of months ago, the WHO called for further studies on the origin of SARS-CoV-2 virus, reiterating that all hypotheses remain open (<https://www.who.int/news/item/30-03-2021-who-calls-for-further-studies-data-on-origin-of-sars-cov-2-virus-reiterates-that-all-hypotheses-remain-open>). On the other hand, in recent days the President of the USA (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/26/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-the-investigation-into-the-origins-of-covid-19/>), as well as the European Union leaders have urged unfettered probe into origins of COVID-19 (<https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/eu-leaders-urge-unfettered-probe-into-origins-of-covid/769199>).

From the first moment, *Environmental Research* has been publishing papers related with the pandemic. To date, 183 articles have been published in regular issues, but most of the in four special issues focused on specific topics: "Environmental, ecological and public health considerations regarding coronaviruses, other viruses, and other microorganisms potentially causing pandemic diseases", "Air quality and COVID-19", "COVID-19 and environmental health", and "SARS-CoV-2 EnvironPoll". Following that line, we are pleased to announce that we will immediately open a portal to receive submissions to a new VSI with the title "**Scientific evidence on the origin of SARS-CoV-2**".

We believe that knowing this origin is a great challenge, not only scientific, but also social. Your manuscripts will be welcome.

Jose L. Domingo

Univeritat Rovira i Virgili, School of Medicine, 43201, Reus, Spain

E-mail address: jose Luis.domingo@urv.cat.

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